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Oral history interview with Grace Morley,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Grace Morley on February 6 and March 24, 1982. The interview was conducted in New Delhi, India by Porter McCray for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Interview

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GRACE MORLEY: It is a great pleasure to welcome you to India again.

PORTER MCCRAY: Well, as you well know, it's always an immense pleasure for me to be here, Grace, in particular, to see you on those rare occasions. I was marvelously pleased to see the other day a notice in the paper of your most recent award from the government, and I see that you're going to be given a proper - during the middle of March - a proper investiture, the award of the Padma Bhushan. Tell me a little about that, and also, since I knew you in one of your earlier incarnations in the States, tell me a little bit about how you happened to come to India and to have stayed on as long as you have.

GRACE MORLEY: To reply to your question, Porter, let me explain about the Padma Bhush award first. That is the honor conferred on me on Republic Day, January 26. The Padma Bhushan, is a very great honor indeed, conferred on civilians who have won a certain distinction or contributed to some line of work valued by India. In my case, it was recognition as an art historian and an expert on museums. The Indians follow the British tradition in announcing awards on an important date in the history of the country. Of course, Republic Day is the outstanding event from every point of view. The Padma Vir Bhushan is the top award for a civilian, and this year only one was awarded, to Muriel Draper, the British admiral's daughter, who devoted her life to serving Gandhi. Next comes the Padma Bhushan, of which there were about fifteen this year. Dr. Stella Kramrisch, who had presented at the Philadelphia Museum that great exhibition, "Manifestations of Shiva," which is still touring the United States, also received this award as an art historian. Others receiving it were all Indians, scientists and cultural leaders in many fields. Then follows the group of Padma Shri. This year, approximately thirty-five Indians, once again, leaders in the fields of science, the arts, culture in many forms, writers, sport leaders. It is a very great honor indeed to receive the Padma Bhushan. It came as a great surprise and touches me very deeply.

I am very proud to have been included in the "honours list" this year, and very pleased that in the many letters and telegrams which I have received congratulating me, it is my work with the museum profession which I have tried to serve here in Asia that is especially stressed. I feel that the honor is not so much a personal recognition

as it is a symbolic recognition of the museum profession and its importance in India today.

As for the second part of your question on how I came to India: it's quite a story in a way, because it seems a strange accident. After I had left UNESCO, I used to go back to Paris every summer during my holiday from my San Francisco Museum of Art post to work on Museum, the technical museum quarterly of UNESCO which was founded under my direction, when I was Head of the Museums Division there, in 1948, or to do any other pertinent task that my successor, Mr. VanderHagen, would ask me to do. One summer, the summer of 1959, when I was in the office, working away, Mr. VanderHagen opened the door of his office which communicated with the one where I was, and said, "I have an Indian visitor here from a ministry and he is interested in discussing the program of a national museum which is being built in New Delhi, and he would very much like to talk with you about it. Would you come in?" I went in and met Dr. de Rosario, who was the Secretary of the Ministry of Scientific and Cultural Affairs.

We talked a half an hour or so. We discussed the various roles that a national museum could play in a capitol city of a country newly independent, as India was. Then I excused myself and went back to my work. Some time later, Mr. VanderHagen came in again and said, "You know, the Indian wonders if you would be interested in coming to India and working in the new national museum when its building is finished and it starts on its regular program." My reply, "I really don't know." At the time, I was not regularly employed in any museum, but was doing free-lance writing, organizing exhibitions and that sort of thing, was living in New York, and had no special obligation any longer to any institution.

So I was free, and my tentative approval then of the possibility of going to India was completely frank. Mr. VanderHagen said, "If you are at all interested, do go and see Dr. de Rosario tomorrow morning before he leaves for Essen for the inauguration of the great Indian exhibition, '5,000 Years of Indian Art,' to open a little later this month. He is at the Crillon and if you could go there about ten o'clock, you'd find him ready to leave but with some time to talk with you."

So the next morning I did turn up at the Crillon. I had very little material with me to hand over to Dr. de Rosario, but we did talk, and he said, "Well, if you are interested, I would very much like you to send me the details about your work, any publications you've done and anything that's pertinent, in other words." And then he said goodbye and went to the airport. When I returned to New York, I followed his instructions. I did get together some material which I thought would be evidence of the fact that I had been a museum director and knew the trade. I thought I knew what he had in mind, though possibly he wasn't able to define it exactly since he was not himself a museum man. What I believed that he had in mind was a pattern of organization and operation for a museum of archeology, arts, manuscripts, coins, decorative arts and anthropology, that would be completely contemporary in its approach.

I had been Head of the Museums Division, of UNESCO and that was the reason, I think, for Dr. de Rosario wishing me to come to India. Well, after he received the materials I sent him, he did delay some months, presumably while it was moving from desk to desk and there were proper consultations at various levels. Eventually I did get a definite offer and a draft of a contract. In the first place, the Indian government wished me to take a contract for three years. However, I did not consent to do that, but suggested that it would be more sensible to start with a contract for half that time. After all, I had no idea whether the Indians would like me, or whether I could do the job they wanted me to do.

Several dates for my arrival were set, and each time deferred. Meanwhile, I made preparations in New York to leave for India. Thanks to your own generosity, I lived in your house while you were away during the period that I had no longer my apartment, but yet was not given a definite date for departure to India. Eventually, however, the definite date was set. I departed from New York with a stopover in Paris, to check in with UNESCO again, and arrived in Bombay on August 6th. I had asked the Indian government to allow me to have a few days in Bombay to see the museum that I knew was there and reported to be extremely good. I did visit the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, found it very rich in collections, and already seeking new patterns of exhibition to attract the general public and to instruct them. However, it was obvious that there were certain handicaps, partly the building itself, partly the fact that there was not a large staff. It was under the directorship of Dr. Moti Chandra, one of the great museum men of India, a leader whom I was to come to know very well later, and who was a tremendous help to me.

I finally arrived in New Delhi on August 9th, and found a car waiting for me and a small delegation, the keeper of art and his assistant to welcome me. The monsoon had set in and the tree-shaded avenues of New Delhi were very pleasant, very green, a great relief after the long trip, for it was a long trip in those days, and also the more highly urbanized environment of Bombay. It was hot and humid, but I had had much experience in tropical countries and found the temperature and humidity not at all oppressive.

The National Museum's new building at this time was only the first unit. It consisted of the entrance hall, the library and the auditorium on either side, and the galleries on three floors. Only the bronzes had been brought to

the new building. Since the great exhibition sent to London in 1947-48 had returned to Delhi, the exhibits from the Indian collections had been shown in the president's palace, the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in the great audience hall and in smaller rooms adjacent.

My first task as the new director was to supervise the transfer of the material from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the first unit of the new building and to arrange for its installation in the contemporary pattern of a museum intended for the instruction of the public as well as for its enjoyment. These aims represented quite a challenge to me as new director. After all, I knew quite a bit about Indian art, and had long been interested and had seen a great many exhibitions in various parts of the world. However, I was by no means an expert. But I did have the advantage of having eminent scholars as heads of the various departments of the museum, and they were able to give me the expert advice that I needed, and did so with great willingness and helpfulness.

Among them, Mr. Sivaramamurti stands out, an eminent scholar in Sanskrit as well as in art history, a specialist in iconography. He later became assistant director and eventually he was my successor in 1966. Also, I recall the very great help that Mrs. Smita Baxi was to me in my task. She was trained as an architect and had received her architectural degree in India, but afterwards went for post-graduate architectural studies to the Netherlands. She had been recruited as head of the Exhibition Department, with the title of Keeper. Under her were also the workshops with the large staff of carpenters and cabinetmakers required to manufacture the gallery furniture, that is to say, pedestals and built-in wall cases of different types.

Very often it was necessary to fabricate in the workshop items that one would expect to find in the open market and which now are easily available. For example, L-hooks, to support shelves in cases, were not available in 1960 and had to be made in the workshop. On the other hand, we did enjoy a very great advantage. For example, the beautiful textiles which were available, hand-woven, with fine textures and enchanting colors, we used them deliberately to give variety to the galleries as the backgrounds for cases. Fortunately, the large sculptures had pedestals, but they were awkward and heavy in design, and though we used them in the beginning, after we opened the museum, we gradually replaced them with more elegant and modern types in the years following.

Another staff member I cannot forget is Dr. P. Banerjee. He was Keeper in Charge of Publications and his task was to print labels especially the introductory labels that were used at the beginning of each gallery to give some background and to help the public, the visitor, understand what he was going to see and its significance. These labels had to be in English, of course, for the international visitor, but also in Hindi for those of the country. He took charge of publishing the small introductory booklet that we prepared for the opening, giving a little about the history of the museum, the importance of the collections, and listing the staff members. Later, he was in charge of publishing the series of books on the Kangra miniature paintings, to which the Minister of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs had committed the museum, even before it opened. These were very handsome, well-illustrated publications, and they were valuable contributions to the art publications of the country.

Soon after my arrival, the minister, Mr. H. Kabir, had consulted me on the possible date for opening the museum formally. He wished it to be inaugurated before the end of the current session of Parliament, that is to say, toward the middle of December, 1960. That provided only four months for installation of the collections, much too short a time. But the National Museum was inaugurated on the 18th of December, 1960. Dr. Radha Krishna presided, and at the function were gathered all the political and cultural leaders in Delhi at that time.

It was held in a "shamiana," that is to say, a brilliantly colored tent outside the museum entrance where the formal speeches were delivered. There followed, of course, the visit to the museum galleries. The museum had been prepared in the Indian fashion for its opening. A curtain of marigolds was stretched across the entrance, and in the entrance hall, in the center, there was a lamp of the traditional kind used always to open events in India, especially cultural events, dance recitals and the like. There was also a floor decoration in colors traditional in many parts of the country.

Mr. Nehru, then prime minister, had been a leader in the planning for the National Museum, in urging that the materials which had come back from London should be shown there in the capitol, and Dr. Rhada Krishna, the vice president, had been a great supporter of the museum in its slow progress as the building was constructed. They both took a deep interest during this first visit and asked many questions of the respective keepers, who stood in their galleries to help in interpreting the great treasures that the museum already possessed.

Later that day, the museum was opened to the general public and from that time on, except for the weekly closed day, on Monday, and certain important holidays, the museum has remained open and has a growing attendance.

Very soon after the opening, the development of educational activities began. For a long time in India, the service of a guide lecturer has been usual in all the larger museums. The National Museum had several

guide/lecturers and they offered guided tours of the galleries at stated hours each day. Soon, however, the National Museum added an innovation, now adopted by almost all the larger museums in the country, that is, regular showings of pertinent films. In the case of the National Museum, it was a matter of showing films on archaeological or historical subjects, showing monuments of the country related to the sculptures in the galleries, for example.

The National Museum has three floors with galleries radiating from a central garden court. Later on, when the additional units of the building are completed, they too will continue the extension from the central garden court. On the ground floor is archaeology, beginning with the proto-historic culture of the Indus valley. This, of course, is referred to often as the Harappan culture from the first important site, now in Pakistan, where the culture was identified. Similarly, the great site of Mohenjo-Daro is in Pakistan, but there are more than a hundred sites of that same culture already identified in India, though only a few of them are as yet completely excavated. This culture dates from approximately 2500 B.C. Of the installation of the National Museum, let me add here that on the anniversary of the inauguration, that is to say, in December, 1961, we opened the galleries of cultural anthropology, that is costumes, jewelry and some artifacts of the various peoples, ethnic minorities, from all parts of the country.

So much for my experience in India. It has meant a great deal to me in many ways. However, I recognize, as you yourself emphasized earlier, Porter, that the Archives of American Art is concerned more with my experience in the early years of service to the development of the arts in San Francisco and the United States in general, rather than to whatever I was able to do later abroad as a result of my long career in the museums of the United States.

I suppose I will have to go back to Cincinnati in 1930. I joined the Cincinnati Art Museum as general curator under Mr. Walter Siple who had very recently been appointed director of that museum in its new expanded form, with galleries added, and with great collections donated to it. That museum was part of the great wave of renovation and improvement of museums that took place in the United States as a result of the training that Paul Sachs had given to so many promising young men at the Fogg Museum in Harvard University.

Walter Siple was one of those who had been trained by Paul Sachs. He had become the assistant director of the Fogg Museum and the director of a summer course for teachers in the smaller colleges of the United States who were selected to spend six weeks or so at Harvard following a special course. It was expected that this course would lead to better teaching in the smaller colleges. It was a project of the American Institute of Architects, which had been somewhat alarmed by the fact that the art teaching had not been on as high a level as they considered desirable. This was understandable. After all, at that time, art history had not received the attention and the very great emphasis that it has developed in the years since 1929. The smaller colleges often had teachers who were drafted, sometimes in emergencies, as happened in my case at Goucher College, then in Baltimore.

In my case, it was the sudden death of the professor of art history that made it necessary for others to fill in the teaching assignments in the course for the rest of the academic year. The professor of Latin, for example, took up the teaching of classic Greek and Roman art, and I, who had had experience in France with a doctoral subject that included both art and literature, was asked to take up the history of art from the Roman period to the present. The respective colleges which sent their candidates to Harvard for an upgraded training in art history, had as a reward, a fund for book purchase of \$200. Now it seems a very small fund, indeed, but at that time it went quite a way, and most of the colleges did need assistance in their book purchase budgets for the sake of the students who needed reference literature of all kinds.

For those who attended the course, it was a very useful experience indeed. For me, it was truly a revelation. I had gone to museums, in Europe. In California, before I went abroad for my post-graduate studies, there had not been very much in the way of museums. The de Young Memorial Museum, for example, was more a museum of history than a museum of art. The art developments in the Bay Region of San Francisco came a good deal later. To me, the Harvard experience opened up a new way of life in the sense that I discovered that there was a possibility of working in a museum and it had the advantage, over the previous experience I had in regard to art, of the handling of art objects themselves. I cared so much about this new opportunity that I endeavored to persuade Harvard to let me enroll for a second doctorate. I did not succeed, but it happened that soon after I had finished the course, Mr. Siple was appointed as director of the Cincinnati Art Museum and he asked me to join the staff as the general curator.

At the end of the academic year, I left Goucher accordingly and went to Cincinnati, settled there, and began to become familiar with the museum and its collection. In the beginning, I was assigned several tasks of routine nature, cataloging collections which had up to that time not had any documentation. Curiously enough, one of such tasks was to accession a large collection of Kashmir shawls. They had been collected in the preceding century by a Cincinnati collector traveling in India, and been given to the museum but had had, up to that time, little attention. Similarly, the same collector, in the mid-nineteenth century, had gathered a collection of Indian

printed cottons, chintzes, which had been framed and very often had been exhibited.

Once again, in retrospect, it is curious to think that my early tasks at the very beginning of my museum career were directed toward Indian material. The Cincinnati Art Museum was a general art museum with old masters, decorative arts of every kind, some modern material as well as ancient, some materials from the Americas – for instance, a very large collection of baskets of American Indians, I recall. From the point of view of someone just beginning a museum career, it was perfect training. An important part of the new program of the renovated and expanded Cincinnati Art Museum was the educational activity. That was carried on very intensively under the direction of Miss Chamberlain, who had experience in teaching. However, as general curator, very often I myself would have to give lectures, though we tried to make use of all the resources of personnel in the community and, from time to time, invited speakers from elsewhere. Regular free lectures were offered on Sunday afternoons, but the great innovation was the museum's work with children. Large groups were enrolled in Saturday morning classes, and that kind of free contribution to the young people of the city was a complete novelty. Obviously, it was important for the future of museum work in the city, because among these young people would eventually be the supporters of the museum in the future, and we had the firm conviction that supporters were persons trained to appreciate the museum's collections and also to feel happy and comfortable in a museum atmosphere. School visits took place also.

However, for me, there was only a supervising interest, for the educational department took complete charge of the appointments with the schools as well as for the Saturday morning classes for the children. From time to time, series of lectures in the evening, which were attended especially by the trustees and other cultural leaders of the community, were offered. Sometimes these were by invited speakers, museum directors, or art scholars of eminent reputation. Sometimes they were given by the director himself. I remember an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Thomas Gainsborough, organized by the museum, as one occasion on which there occurred a series of lectures. Thomas Gainsborough was, of course, the great British landscape and portrait artist. The Cincinnati Art Museum, in the Emory Collection, had a very fine example of his portrait painting. The exhibition was the first of the major loan exhibitions, which were to be a specialty of the Cincinnati Art Museum in the years to follow. It was a significant example which marked the beginning of the second fifty years of the museum's existence. I was very fortunate to have been at the museum at that time. It was a beginning of a development which continued for the next fifty years, as I was able to verify when I returned in May, 1981, to see what the museum had become since I knew it so well fifty years earlier.

The climate of the Middle West did not agree with me, and I was forced to return to California for that and other reasons at the end of the season, in June, 1933. Thanks to this experience at the Cincinnati Art Museum, I was able to obtain the post of director at the San Francisco Museum of Art, in 1934. The San Francisco Museum of Art had had an interesting history. It was the outgrowth of the art building of the Panama Pacific Exposition, which had taken place as a very great event indeed in San Francisco in 1915. It happened that I was taken to see that exhibition, and had been impressed very much by the art section, though I must confess, since I lived in a small town north of San Francisco, St. Helena, that I had until that time, seen very little art. When the exposition closed, the San Francisco Art Association continued to occupy the fine arts building. However, it was a temporary building only, and in time began to fall apart.

Meanwhile, the Art Association had collected some funds and it had built quite a good art library. By the early '20s, San Francisco was thinking of a War Memorial Opera House, and the first plan had been to have art galleries surrounding the auditorium of the opera house. However, as time went on, the plans modified and it was decided to have the opera house and beside it, to the north, a second building to correspond in style – the exterior, at least – to that of the opera house.

The second building originally was meant to be a museum. However, it became necessary to have an election for a bond issue in order to supplement the funds which the Art Association made available. Veterans of the war were organizing themselves into various veterans' organizations and they also were looking for an opportunity to have permanent shelter for their activities. Accordingly, the city called on the veterans to support the election of the bond issue. As a result, it was successful and ample funds became available. There was, however, a certain distortion. The building became known as the Veterans Building, and the museum was reduced to the top floor and some space for storage in the basement. As the building was approximately 200 ft. by 200 ft., there was very good exhibition space around a central court. Later, it was turned into a small auditorium, since monumental sculpture was not the direction in which the San Francisco Museum of Art was able to collect in the very beginning.

The War Memorial Opera House was a great success and allowed San Francisco to maintain its very great interest in music, to present a regular season of opera once a year, and to give very good concert programs by its own symphony orchestra and by visiting groups of musicians. In the companion building in the War Memorial, called the Veterans Building, the veterans' organizations occupied three floors, and for the museum, there was only the top floor, although the galleries were admirable. They had skylights supplemented by cove lighting; it was a judicious mixture of blue as well as the ordinary yellow incandescent lamps. In other words, for the time,

the galleries were about as perfect as one could imagine.

By 1930, the building had been complete. The veterans had moved into their various meeting rooms, but the museum floor remained closed. Important civic leaders were supporting the museum, but they had not, up until 1933, been able to find a director, nor had they been able to organize the required funds to support operation of the museum. It was then that I returned to San Francisco, and knew, thanks to a colleague, Walter Heil, then director of the de Young Memorial Museum and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, that a search was on for a director for the projected museum.

It was then that I inquired about the possibility of being selected, and after a time, I was indeed selected and began my work in the autumn of 1934. Only one exhibition had been planned at that time, and that was the "Carnegie International Exhibition of Paintings," for early in 1935. For the opening of the San Francisco Museum of Art, it had been possible to arrange an invited exhibition of outstanding modern painters and a very comprehensive exhibition of artists of the region. The museum at that time had practically no permanent collection. It had inherited a good basic library from the former museum in the old fine arts building. It did have a collection of ninety-eight modern French prints, which included several examples of Bonnard and other moderns of the period. A doubtful master was there, also, but nothing else.

Curiously, also, the arrangements for the museum resulted in having funds for invited exhibitions, but not for purchase. The building was given without rent by the city, and the maintenance of the quarters and the provision of the elevator operator also were made by the city. In addition, the city made an annual grant for invited exhibitions. It was not a large grant, certainly in terms of today, it would be considered very small indeed.

After the opening exhibition, therefore, it was a matter of arranging different exhibitions to fill the galleries in an appropriate fashion. They were, as I have already said, almost ideal galleries for the time. The lighting was good, the walls were lined with a pleasant beige fabric. This meant changing exhibitions could be handled without too much difficulty and without damage to the walls. One of the problems, obviously, was to find an appropriate role in the Bay Region for the museum.

It had, truly been the first art museum in that region. But in the time between 1915 and its opening in 1935, the de Young Memorial Museum had been modified from what had been a rather miscellaneous collection, more, perhaps useful for history than art, and also, the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, which had been founded as a memorial for the First World War. Its program was focused on French art particularly, and the importance of its collection of Rodin was of great value for setting a standard. Later on, it became outstanding also as a cultural center, having a very pleasant auditorium. But that process also took a little time.

The San Francisco Museum of Art then had to find a special place for itself. The two other art museums, the de Young Memorial and the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, were city museums, that is to say, they were staffed by appointees of the city and their support was from city funds. The San Francisco Museum of Art, on the contrary, was a private institution. It maintained, in other words, the character it had had earlier. It had a board of trustees, and as time went on, it had several different supporter groups. But at the beginning, there was a board of trustees and women's board. In other words, there was an effort to establish roots in the community and to make the museum a part of the, shall we say, voluntary devotion to art there.

The situation in the far West had been curious in a certain sense, but completely logical, given the distance across the continent. There were excellent artists, but they had had only from time to time an example of a good modern exhibition to see. Obviously, that meant that they tended to cling to a certain extent to more traditional styles of art. It seemed to the trustees and to me, as an officer in charge of the San Francisco Museum of Art, that our growth problem, that our very great problem indeed, was to find a way of stimulating the artists, giving them the chance to see what the contemporary trends were, and at the same time, to accustom the public to the modern currents of art and to encourage it to support the artists, their own artists in the community, but also, the general stream of contemporary art as there would be an opportunity to acquire as well as to appreciate the best in the contemporary movements.

As a result of this decision on policy, exhibitions were invited from other centers, especially from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which had been established for over a half dozen years, and was giving very substantial leadership in the field of contemporary art. It had, however, the advantage over the San Francisco Museum of Art of beginning with very considerable and important collections of modern art, donated by founders and supporters of the museum. In the first few years, most of the important exhibitions that were presented by the Museum of Modern Art in New York were brought to San Francisco by the San Francisco Museum of Art. I've already mentioned the "Carnegie International," and effort to survey the whole field of contemporary art of the time, had been engaged from the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, and was shown soon after the museum opened in 1935. Except for that, all the other exhibitions had to be planned, had to be borrowed, had to be financed, and it was not always an easy task.

There was a great deal of activity in the region fortunately, and it became a custom to present annually the San Francisco Art Association's juried exhibitions. They were carefully organized, were large and representative, and they certainly were valuable in stimulating the artist community, giving it a chance to make a showing before the public and to give the public also an opportunity for making judgments. But in between times, there were intervals that had to be filled in one way or another. In the organization of exhibitions, as everyone who's had experience carrying out such procedures knows only too well, the time taken must be a year or two years, and the amount of work involved, in correspondence, perhaps in traveling for making a selection, is very great indeed.

In the beginning, the San Francisco Museum of Art had not funds enough to provide all the curatorial work that was required. However, a great deal was accomplished. In the early years, during the first three or four years, at least three outstanding exhibitions were organized by the museum in the international modern field. These were a comprehensive exhibition of the work of Paul Cézanne, an exhibition of the work of Paul Gauguin, and a very good exhibition, up to 1937, of the paintings, drawings and prints of Henri Matisse. The Cézanne exhibition and the Gauguin exhibition were composed of items borrowed from museums in the United States, augmented by borrowing from dealers. The Matisse exhibition, however, had only one source, the collection of the Michael Steins. Michael and Sara Stein had lived for many years in France and had been patrons of Matisse. They returned to San Francisco in 1936, became good friends of the San Francisco Museum of Art almost at once, and were generous in lending anything that they had to the museum.

In between these major exhibitions and those organized in the same way later, it was necessary to gather other exhibitions to keep the galleries filled. As I have said, the Museum of Modern Art in New York was a continuous source of fine exhibitions, very valuable in setting a standard for appreciation and understanding by the general public and, of course, important especially for the artists. Coming from New York, these exhibitions had great prestige. Fortunately, however, exhibitions drawn from local sources continued to have great interest for both the public and artists. Therefore, one-man exhibitions and small group exhibitions drawn from the artists in the region were presented fairly regularly. Then there were the borrowed exhibitions, small and large, from dealers. There were no dealers at that time of any great importance serving the contemporary field in San Francisco. But the museum kept in close touch with the dealers' galleries in New York, especially, and very frequently was able to persuade the dealers to lend either a whole exhibition or selections from an exhibition for showing in San Francisco. It must be confessed that at this time, San Francisco provided few buyers. However, the sympathy of the lenders was great. They understood that the museum was in the process of building an appreciative public, and hoped greatly to have eventually a group of collectors in the community. In one way or another, the San Francisco Museum of Art galleries were kept filled all year round, usually by exhibitions lasting a month or six weeks, and major ones usually accompanied by intensive educational activity - by guided tours, perhaps, or by special lectures.

But the focus of educational effort eventually was the Carnegie Course. This was a three year course, supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation in New York, which had accepted a course of lecture-demonstrations of art techniques by well known local artists. The second year provided a course of the type that is usually known as history of art, chronologically following the development of art in the Western world. The third year course was to be specialized, focusing on a few major developments in contemporary art. The first year course was especially valuable for the public because it provided an introduction to art techniques. Following the hour-long lecture-demonstration for each group of fifty, each session had a half an hour or more of opportunity for those participating to try their own hands at the medium which had been demonstrated. Thus, for oil painting on panel or canvas, the participants were able to use colors and brush on these supports. For mural painting, similarly, a small section of ground for the application of tempera and for the application of color to a damp surface in the fresco vero technique were provided. Modeling was comparatively simple with its use of clay. Sculpture was illustrated by using large lumps of soap, which allowed the portions to be cut away somewhat similarly to the way a sculptor would cut away stone or wood.

The majority of those enrolled in the three groups in the first year course continued into the second year, carrying on their interest in art based on techniques to the more traditional fashion of studying art as art history. Meanwhile, the first year course was again started for groups of fifty, and this continued for three years. There is no doubt that this experience in learning about art techniques and practicing them, at least in an elementary form, then surveying the development of art in the Western world, contributed to forming a group of leaders in the community, interested in art, somewhat informed, and concerned to give it every possible support. Among them were some people of considerable wealth, and their interest eventually led to collecting.

Meanwhile, there was a collector in San Francisco, Albert M. Bender, who had always been very close to the artists, often bought their works because of his great interest, joined part of the time to his knowing their great need of encouragement, if not of absolutely practical financial support. He was a member of the museum's board of trustees, and became a regular donor. In the beginning he gave from his own collection, which included a great number of very interesting examples of the work of Diego Rivera, who had been in San Francisco in the early '30s, and who had carried on a number of mural commissions there.



There were a few other collectors also. Some eventually donated items from their collections to the museum. Others, however, stood by to lend on occasion. I recall the W.W. Crocker collection, with some very important works of the French modern masters. To include local important loans in major exhibitions was valuable, of course, in encouraging others not yet collectors, to think seriously of starting out to use their wealth to build collections. At that time, San Francisco had many wealthy patrons very active in the support of music. It was hoped to turn their attention also to the field of contemporary art.

One group of very important loans, post-impressionist works, came to the museum unsolicited. One evening, when the dinner hour had come and the museum was very quiet, because though it was open, at that time, from twelve noon until ten o'clock at night, there was likely to be a lull in attendance from about five thirty to seven or seven thirty. During such a lull, a tall, thin young man asked to see me. He introduced himself and asked if the museum would be interested in having some works on loan from him and his brother. He said that he and his brother had now settled in Berkeley and thought that they would like to have these works of art on public exhibition near their homes. He explained that they had been on loan to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This caller was Robert Oppenheimer, who had joined the faculty of the University of California in Berkeley. At that time, he was of course known only to physicists, but later became very famous indeed. This loan of half a dozen modern French masters remained with the museum for many years, and was a constant pleasure, either incorporated in an appropriate exhibition or hung separately.

Even during the war, by the wish of its owners, it remained in San Francisco, to be enjoyed by the local public and also by the soldiers embarking for the Pacific war. (Other occasional loans, art works of private collectors, the museum arranged to lend to museums in other parts of the country, thought to be safer than the port of San Francisco.) Encouraging as such a permanent loan was, it remained unique for many years.

Similarly, gifts were few, and the museum had to depend largely on changing exhibitions. It seems fantastic, perhaps, but over a hundred exhibitions, large and small, were presented each year in the first few years after the museum opened. They were not large exhibitions in most cases, but small groups of interesting examples of works by artists who had come to attention and whose work could be borrowed from dealers in New York. Eventually this meant, of course, that the San Francisco public had a very wide exposure to contemporary art as it developed. The number of collectors in the city gradually increased, and the importance of their collections grew. The Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939, reopened in 1940, provided a very great stimulus to art in the Bay Region. An extraordinary exhibition of old masters was organized by Walter Heil, then director of the de Young Memorial Museum, in a very large building, which later was to become one of the airplane hangars, on the island (Treasure Island) created in San Francisco Bay for the use of the exposition. Besides this old master section, there was a section on the countries of the Pacific. This included the countries of Asia and of Central and South America. Thomas Carr Howe, then director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, collected the Mexican section. The San Francisco Museum of Art was asked to provide the exhibitions of contemporary art from the Pacific countries of South America. They were selected by the director, and eventually were exhibited at the exposition. This was the beginning of a field of contemporary art to which the museum later devoted a great deal of interest.

From New Delhi, March 24, 1982:

From so far away, thinking back so long ago to what happened in California when I returned and took over direction the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1934, is a little difficult. I remember so well the formal opening early in 1935. It was attended by all the leading people in San Francisco, artists, because of the Art Annual of the Art Association which was an important part of the opening exhibitions, but also the social leaders and the supporters of the museum. Also, of course, the civic officials, because after all, the museum was in a building belonging to the city, under the city's control, and depending to a very large extent on the city's support. The city did provide annually substantial funds which could be used for bringing exhibitions to San Francisco, a very valuable service indeed at that time, since the West Coast was still, to a very great extent, separated by distance and time from art centers of the East Coast and of Europe. Flying was rare, and took quite a long while by comparison with the few hours of today. Artists, therefore generally speaking, had not traveled to the East Coast, let alone Europe, so that there was a certain isolation. There was not, however, any lack of talent and skill, and there had been considerable support for the artists in the San Francisco community.

The San Francisco Art Association must be given credit for the considerable support that was provided for artistic activity in the city. It had enrolled as members most of the practicing artists of California and it conducted the San Francisco School of Fine Arts. It also had been responsible for continuing the San Francisco Museum of Art in the fine arts building of the 1915 exposition, as has been mentioned, until that building had become unsafe for use and the project for building the new Civic Center containing exhibition galleries took form. The Art Association conducted the annual exhibitions, juried exhibitions, which at times were open, not only to local artists, but to any American artist who cared to submit. However, the emphasis certainly was on the production of those living in the immediate vicinity of San Francisco and in the Monterey peninsula.

Sometimes also there were entries from Southern California. At that time, Los Angeles was not as active in art as San Francisco. For a good many years, after the opening of the San Francisco Museum of Art in its new quarters in the Civic Center, the activities of the County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, which was one part of the County Museum building which included also a natural history section, were very modest. The collection of art in the County Museum was, then, small. Compared to what was possible to do in San Francisco in the way of loan exhibitions, thanks to that city subsidy, the Los Angeles' museum had little activity.

On the other hand, the County Museum in Los Angeles had begun a very modest program of collecting works of the modern school, thanks to one collector who had been interested in the development of the French movement. The spectacular collections of modern masters in Los Angeles and in general in Southern California were to come much later. There had been a showing of the "Blue Rider" group of paintings and watercolors, rather small scale works on the whole, in the Oakland Museum of Art in the early years of the thirties, thanks to the arrival in the Bay Region of Mrs. Galka Scheyer, a collector of this material, who lent a large portion of her collection to Oakland. Later, the bulk of her collection went to the Pasadena Museum of Art. Otherwise, there had been no opportunity, either for artists or for the public of California, to see any amount of contemporary international art.

That explains the very great importance of the San Francisco Museum of Art's fund used for borrowing modern masters from any available source in the early years of its history in the Civic Center. Fortunately, there was an extremely good source from the very beginning. As referred to earlier, a few years before, the Museum of Modern Art in New York had been founded with a considerable group of important modern masters donated by its founders and supporters. By 1935, the Museum of Modern Art had developed its program of special exhibitions accompanied by scholarly catalogues. Those became available for loan, and the San Francisco Museum of Art profited very frequently. Only rarely could the San Francisco Museum of Art aspire to organizing its own exhibitions of an international standards. It did produce three of considerable interest. Cézanne paintings and drawings, paintings by Paul Gauguin, and Matisse paintings from the Stein collection. Otherwise, it had to depend on what it could borrow from dealers, in the case of small exhibitions, one-man shows of modern masters, for instance, and on these larger, very well organized exhibitions of the Museum of Modern Art.

At that time, in the early '30s, until the time of the war, indeed, the development of touring exhibitions had not been carried very far. Later it became possible to organize touring exhibitions of some interest from sources in the East, or from collections as they grew on the West Coast, for circulation to the museums up and down the West Coast, but it took some time for growth of the individual museums and their interest in the development of modern art. However there was one unique opportunity that came the way of the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1937, when the Matisse exhibition, borrowed from the collection of the Michael Steins was presented in the museum after their return to the San Francisco Bay Region from their long sojourn in France. Unfortunately, no catalogue was printed, only a checklist. Later, the San Francisco Museum of Art was on two different occasions to present exhibitions of the work of Henri Matisse and by that time, the vogue and appreciation of his art had so grown in the Bay Region that there was a tremendous public response. Those exhibitions were organized by the Museum of Modern Art and were available for circulation.

When trying to review the early history of the San Francisco Museum of Art in the new building in the Civic Center, it is, perhaps, most interesting to attempt to recall the climate of the community at that time. In 1935 the high rise buildings were few. The community supporting the arts and music, the patrons of the San Francisco Museum of Art and those also who were interested in the de Young Memorial Museum and in the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, were a conservative group in many ways. But in other ways, they were very open to new ideas and very liberal. Principally, they should be characterized, those members of the San Francisco community at that time, as being interested in giving of their best for causes in which they believed and received no direct benefit for themselves from whatever they contributed to the development of the arts, of culture in general in the community. It was a very satisfactory atmosphere in which to work. One felt support, even though the financial resources were modest indeed, and the effort to develop a museum to match the standards one held privately was a continuing struggle. The lack of resources for purchase was, of course, a very great trial to the staff of the San Francisco Museum of Art, to me as its director, and to a lesser degree, I suppose, because not felt as keenly, to its trustees and loyal supporters.

The trustees did not meet more than once a year, but the women's board, which had been founded at the same time as the new group of trustees, met monthly and had a very deep interest in everything that went on in the museum, lending a lively support to everything it did. This was a constant encouragement and solace in periods of disappointment and in failures to achieve the standards that one aspired to. Its members were, to a great extent, the patrons of the music development in San Francisco, which had also, it will be recalled, prompted the foundation of the Civic Center building and the opera house in the neighboring building. About half, however, were somewhat younger women, but inspired by very much the same spirit of devotion, ignoring personal profit and benefit from what they did for the museum, thinking only of what it needed. The museum, therefore, had a very favorable atmosphere in which to work, and though the purchase funds and donations were far from ideal, they did at least represent genuine support.

In the beginning, the donors were the more important factors in trying to build a collection. When an important object had to be acquired, it was necessary to solicit funds separately and individually. It didn't happen very often. However, as time went on, it developed that there were certain opportunities of valuable kind. For example, the San Francisco Museum of Art took part, as did the other two museums, in the support of the Golden Gate International Exposition (1939) and in the exhibitions planned for Treasure Island, the artificial island beside the Buena Vista Island (Yerba Buena) in the San Francisco Bay, which eventually became a naval base, but in the meanwhile, was to serve for the exposition. For the first season, 1939, it was decided to have in the fine arts building, which was simply one of the huge hangars adapted for that purpose, an exhibition of old masters and an exhibition representing the arts of countries of the Pacific basin. Walter Heil, director of the de Young Memorial Museum and a scholar of considerable eminence, organized the old master exhibition. An innovation in the presentation of that exhibition was the use of colored backgrounds, painted, of course, for the different foreign schools. It made a very rich and effective background and was considered something of an innovation at the time.

The exhibition of the countries of the Pacific was put in my general charge, although the expert obtained for the organization of that exhibition was very great scholar indeed, who had for many years been outstanding on the faculty of Harvard University, Langdon Warner. He was especially an expert in the field of Japanese art, had spent much of his time in Japan, and knew intimately a great part of Eastern Asia. He collected material for many months preceding the opening of the exposition.

Meanwhile, for the Eastern border of the Pacific, it was decided that the San Francisco Museum of Art should depute its director to see what was available in the countries of Latin America. That was the occasion for my first trip down south as far as Chile. Thomas Carr Howe, later director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, was assigned the responsibility of Mexico. Mexico had been important in California art since the early '30s. Diego Rivera, a leading mural painter from Mexico who used the true fresco technique which he had learned in Europe before his return to Mexico in the early '20s, was commissioned in 1931 or so to do two major frescoes in public buildings in San Francisco, in the San Francisco Stock Exchange and in the California School of Fine Arts. In addition, he did a few frescoes in private homes, and he did a considerable amount of easel painting, the results of his industry eventually being distributed among the collectors in San Francisco and later entering the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Art. As a consequence, the mural movement in Mexico enjoyed great prestige in San Francisco and, in general, in California and later, of course, had some influence in the rest of the United States.

The success of the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939, despite the rival international exposition in New York, prompted a movement to extend the exposition to a second season in 1940. International participation fell off slightly because of the war in Europe. However, increased emphasis on the Pacific arts made for a lively exposition presentation, and attracted a considerable tourist attendance. After all, international travel also was cut off to some extent at that time. Pacific House, the theme building of the exposition, was changed in its role and became the headquarters of many cultural and recreational events, and was, like the contemporary Latin American arts section, in the charge of the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

The next period that stands out in memory is that of the war, which began, of course, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941. Now at that time, the San Francisco Museum of Art had unusual hours for a museum, opening at twelve noon and remaining open until ten in the evening on weekday nights, a period that allowed attendance by those busy in the daytime, and a great many activities were carried on in the evening. The exhibition galleries were, of course, brilliantly lighted. As bombing of the city was feared, a rigorous program of blackout was imposed. As the museum's galleries had skylights, one of the first necessities was to find a way to black them out. Otherwise, the museum would have had to close in the evening. In deed, the authorities did issue a directive that the museum should close at dusk. However, even before the directive could be implemented, the staff found a way to block out the skylights so that a majority of the galleries could be used in the evening and it was possible to get the permission of the authorities to remain open.

As a matter of fact, in war conditions, it seemed even more important to have what activities could be carried on in the evening in the museum continue rather than be interrupted. San Francisco became one of the ports for sending troops to the Pacific war. Certain efforts were made to provide facilities and amenities for those interested in art, who might possibly have a day or so in San Francisco before being shipped overseas. The museum arranged for most loan collections and some private collections of its supporters to be sent inland to places presumably safer for them. However, the Oppenheims, Robert Oppenheimer and his brother, had said that they wished their loan to be kept on exhibition in the museum during the war period. The black out meant, of course, curtains, and very dense ones, on all the office windows and on the entryway so that no little arrow of light, no chink, could be discovered. This made it possible to continue operating the San Francisco Museum of Art throughout the war period.

However, there were a great many other problems. For example, we began to lose a few men on the staff, for

war work in some cases, but also for the army. The time came when there remained only one old man, in charge of packing, and a number of women staff members, who stayed on and carried out the essential work of the museum.

The next problem was the "occupation" of the San Francisco Museum of Art by the United Nations. The United Nations had its charter meeting in San Francisco in 1945, and the two Civic Center buildings, the opera house and the veterans' building, were taken over by the government as the site for all aspects of the meeting. The opera house provided an adequate, and even favorable, setting for the plenary meetings. The veterans' building, with its numerous rooms, which had been fitted out as meeting rooms for various veterans' organizations, were admirable for committee meetings. While the fourth floor, that of the museum, was used for the various services required by a large international meeting: cyclostyling of documents; stenographers' and interpreters' contributions; a world-wide communications center, and the like.

In order to adapt this large space to practical use, the exhibition spaces were partitioned, and as a result, the fabric lining of the galleries' walls suffered a great deal of damage. However, the museum still managed to survive. The basement area still could be used for storage, and a number of exhibitions which had been arranged before it was known that the United Nations meeting would be held in its premises were received there and then were transferred to a location downtown, a store which fortunately happened to be vacant, next to the St. Francis Hotel. The St. Francis Hotel, with its entrance on Post Street, and the main entrance on Union Square, was headquarters of the Russian delegation, and since the museum by this time had practically no staff, the director would go out in the early morning and sweep clean the sidewalk in front of this store on Post Street. San Francisco is a windy city and papers would pile up in the entranceway. Meanwhile, the Russians, very handsome, tall men in military uniform, would come out the side entrance on Post Street, waiting for the automobile transport to the Civic Center and the United Nations meetings.

This store, the temporary San Francisco Museum of Art, was adapted more or less satisfactorily for the showing of exhibitions and it did serve as a sort of center of information for art activity in the city. Obviously, during the meetings of the United Nations, there were visitors from all over the world, and, in some cases at least, they were concerned with art.

Then the United Nations charter was signed. The one advantage that the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art had was a pass to all the plenary meetings and the opportunity to hear the speakers, famous people who participated, it was a very great privilege, and also, one felt that the signing of the charter was indeed an historic event. At that time we were all hopeful that the war had indeed ended and that there would be no more wars to follow.

The museum eventually moved back to its own quarters to find the galleries badly damaged. Obviously, it was impossible immediately to have the walls relined. Because the renovation had to be very extensive, it had to be thorough. It was a matter of a good many months before the architects and technicians could consult with the trustees on the matters of finance and on the practical renovation, improvements in some cases, with the director.

Eventually, plans were drawn up, adopted, approved, and the work began. In the meanwhile, the second international organization of importance, the one of very great direct interest to the museum and the whole cultural field, UNESCO, was being planned. In November, 1946, its first meeting was scheduled to be held in Paris to consider all aspects of this projected organization and to adopt its charter.

The director of the San Francisco Museum of Art had in the meanwhile been co-opted by the Department of the Navy for a large committee consisting of something like sixty specialists in many fields, including, as the other specialist on museums, the director of Metropolitan at that time, Francis Henry Taylor. The Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, had created the committee with the idea of improving the life of navy personnel. The idea was to recruit a group of young men, interested in all the cultural fields and of very high intellectual caliber indeed. In order to acquaint the members of the committee with circumstances of navy life, he had arranged to have them meet at various places where naval training was carried. Thus, at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center a meeting had been held. A meeting had been held also on an aircraft carrier and other meeting places for observing closely conditions of naval life. In October, the meeting was held in the Northeast, a station of submarines, and the committee was studying the conditions of the personnel in the close confinement that the submarine at that time imposed on its crew.

Just as the group of committee members was about to go from the dock to the dock of submarine, the officer-in-charge of embarkation handed the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art a telegram. It was from the State Department in Washington and informed her that she had been selected to serve on the UNESCO Secretariat as Consultant on Museums and Libraries for the first meeting, the charter meeting, of the international organization to be held in Paris, early in November, 1946. She had, of course, known about preparations for establishing this second international organization to serve the fields of science and culture. However, she had had no

expectation of being in any way directly connected with it. The innovative programs of the San Francisco Museum of Art in exhibitions and educational activities were the basis for her selection. They had become widely known by then.

The submarine cruise was an exciting event for someone who had never been on such a craft before, and it included a very good luncheon and its normal "crash" dive as part of the demonstration of its normal operation. However, with the telegram in hand, it was a moment of excitement on another plane as well. As soon as the cruise ended, the director got in touch with her State Department acquaintances in Washington to find out what was to be included in this request to represent the United States in Paris at the first meeting of UNESCO.

The next day, she went to Washington and learned all the details. As a result, she telephoned to her authorities in San Francisco and informed them of what had been proposed and asked permission to begin to make arrangements. In about ten days, all the arrangements were made, a passport obtained, passage by plane to London first, and then to Paris, secured, and after a brief return to San Francisco, to consult with the trustees, she left on this new assignment.

Julian Huxley, later Sir Julian Huxley, had been in charge of the preparatory meetings of the organization which was to become UNESCO, which had taken place in London. He had been earlier the director of the London zoo, and was interested in museums. He was on the same plane as the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art, knew that she was on the plane, and very thoughtfully took her in his charge.

At that time, it was not possible to fly directly from New York to London, but one had at least one stop in Newfoundland before crossing the Atlantic. It was therefore a much longer trip than it is today. However, it was not too exhausting, and on arrival in London, Julian Huxley was kind enough to ask the director to go to his home and stay a few days. I was anxious to have a few days there in order to see the museums in London which were beginning to resume their normal operation after the period of the war, and to become acquainted with the British museum community as far as it was possible. Being in Julian Huxley's home in Hampstead was a very great convenience. At that time, electricity was short, it was cold and damp, but somehow, one hardly noticed the physical discomforts in the effort to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible as a background for the meetings that were to follow in about a week. It was then that I became acquainted with Leigh Ashton, at the time, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum and busy introducing new methods of presentation of the very great and rich collections of that museum. Later, we met very frequently because he became the representative on the British delegation, their expert on museums, and so we had a great deal to discuss.

On the evening of November 3, 1946, I arrived in Paris, and the meetings were beginning the next day. I was attached as Consultant on Museums to the Library Division, which was headed by a British specialist, Bobby Carter. We worked very closely together during the meetings. To my very great pleasure, I discovered that the U.S. delegation included a very good friend of mine, a fellow worker in a way, from the San Francisco Museum of Art, since she was the leader of the women's board, Mrs. Helen Russell. I saw her frequently during the meetings, but at that time, there was a very strict protocol. Those on the International Secretariat did not frequent their national delegations except when needing to instruct the members. The meetings were absorbing.

We of the Secretariat worked very hard indeed, but we also attended the plenary meetings where the broad issues on the subjects to be included in the organization's work were discussed and the charter was framed, following the leadership of Archibald MacLeish and his famous saying, that "as wars were conceived in the minds of man, it was in the minds of man that they must be eliminate." We all believed in those days that indeed, we on our level, our intellectual and cultural level, were contributing as the United Nations did on its political and military level, to the elimination of war forever. There was then a hope and a confidence that in retrospect one recalls as a sort of guiding light and article of faith, that meant a tremendous amount to all of us.

Well, after the charter was signed and the organization settled down to its day-to-day tasks in that very famous building, the Majestic Hotel, where the bathrooms became the offices of secretaries and the bedrooms were turned into the workrooms of the various departments, a temporary consultant such as I was was considered to have complete my assignment. However, I was asked by Julian Huxley to consider returning and I promised to try to do so. I made the suggestion that museums should be separate from libraries and that there should be a Museums Division. That was agreed to, and I promised Julian Huxley that on my return to San Francisco I would try to make the necessary arrangements. Knowing that the museum was going to be renovated and would be closed for active work for many months, I felt it quite possible that the trustees would consent to letting me go.

Just as the UNESCO meetings were being completed, the Allied authorities concerned with the recovery and safekeeping of art during the last years of the war, requested me to make a trip to Germany to see the several depositories and to consult with the French, British and, especially, with the American authorities in charge of these depositories of art. I was informed that I could take with me an assistant, and I invited Helen Russell to join me. This she was very happy to do, and together we traveled, first to Frankfurt, and eventually to Berlin and to other centers where art had been collected and was waiting to be returned to the places from which the

Germans had taken it.

Everywhere we went, we were in the hands of the military authorities. We visited, of course, Munich and there saw the devastation, but also found that some exhibitions were taking place and that there were young promising German scholars in charge. However, it was not possible to have normal relations with them. One could not take a meal, for instance, with a German. We had to have our meals at the army mess. The work by the specialists attached to the Allied armies, in charge of collecting, and safeguarding the art objects, was admirable. The items had been carefully collected. They were documented; they were taken care of according to the best preservation knowledge of the time. Many of those who later became directors in museums in the United States or were curators in special departments were at that time in this service, and it was for them a very valuable and important experience.

This brief visit to the art depositories in Germany under the control of the British, the French, and the Americans, preparing to return the recovered objects to their original owners was interesting and reassuring. It was evidence of the advanced level that care for art objects and concern for them had achieved, even despite the destruction of the war years. To the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art, with its specialization in contemporary art, it was also useful because of the discovery that many of the dealers who had not been able to operate in Germany during the years preceding the war, when modern art was considered degenerate, had begun to return, especially, of course, to Munich.

On my return to UNESCO in June, 1947, to take up the duties as head of the Museums Division, it was possible to observe further developments of this procedure of collecting and returning items that had been either taken away and put in safe places during the war years or had been collected by the followers of Hitler for their personal collections. For example, when the first general conference of ICOM, founded under the encouragement of the Museums Division, took place in Paris in July, 1948, it honored the return of works of art to the Paris museums and their reopening. Collections of these museums had been in various places in France for safekeeping during the war period. Museum, UNESCO's technical quarterly, in French and English, concerned with all aspects of museum work, was launched in honor of this first general conference, and the first number was on the reopened Paris museums.

ICOM, the International Council of Museums, which had been prepared during a number of years immediately following the war, actually took its form in Mexico City at the time of the second general conference of UNESCO in November, 1949. The Museums Division facilitated in every way the formation of this organization. It was one of the first, and it has turned out, one of the most successful of the non-governmental professional organizations attached to UNESCO. UNESCO has depended on it (ICOM) to provide for its (UNESCO) museum projects the experts required. It also ensures to UNESCO deep roots in all the cultural, intellectual and scientific fields museums serve. The ICOM-UNESCO documentation center with information on museums all over the world is one of its most important developments.

After the UNESCO service, ending in June, 1949, I, as director, returned to the San Francisco Museum of Art according to my promise. At that time, the museum had been refurbished and had been considerably improved, as far as its facilities on the fourth floor went, by the addition of office space. Slowly the staff began to grow, and new activities were taken up. It was a very good period for art in San Francisco. Many of the artists who had been in the services returned to San Francisco on various government subsidies to continue their training at the California School of Fine Arts. Also, this was the time when Clyfford Still and a good number of other leading American artists came to San Francisco to teach, either in the regular sessions of the school or for shorter periods of the summer sessions. There began to emerge in San Francisco a very diversified art movement, clearly an expressionist movement, very spontaneous and very vigorous.

As a result of the attention that this activity had gained in the United States, the museum was asked to organize an exhibition in South America for the Bienal of São Paulo, Brazil in 1955. The theme chosen was West Coast art. It proved a very useful and productive survey of much activity going on in that part of the country at this period. The exhibition in São Paulo was highly successful and the director served as the U.S. commissioner. At that time, the São Paulo Bienal was held in one of the temporary buildings, not ideally adapted to exhibition purposes, but it had been possible to present the material in an attractive way. It is perhaps interesting to recall that this was one of the first international showings, and very successful, of Richard Diebenkorn's work.

As for the art climate in San Francisco, generally collectors, sympathizers of contemporary art, had greatly increased in numbers since the museum had opened, now almost twenty years earlier. San Francisco could not rival Los Angeles as a collecting center of modern masters, but it had by the mid-fifties a very considerable group of discriminating collectors acquiring material of international importance. The museum, however, still remained without funds for purchase. Occasionally, an important example of some modern school came to attention in one of its invited exhibitions, and at the insistence of the director, funds were raised and eventually a good example of modern art was added to its slowly growing collection.

The same policy of annual exhibitions, juried carefully, on behalf of the San Francisco Art Association, and of frequent one-man and of small group exhibitions of the work of the local artists continued to be carried on. The result was a great stimulus for the artists of the region. The fact that so many mature artists had returned to the region, and that artists who later were to be recognized as great leaders were there as teachers, had a very great influence indeed.

The Museum of Modern Art in New York, which had grown greatly and had its own building, was still an important source of borrowing of modern masters for the San Francisco Museum of Art. However, there had developed also the important small museum (gallery) of Art of This Century, organized by Peggy Guggenheim in New York. She was very sympathetic to the San Francisco Museum of Art, lent liberally on many occasions, and very often it turned out, made gifts from an exhibition at the end of the period of its showing.

If the activities of the artists were encouraging and provided a support for the museum, similarly, the fact that collecting in San Francisco and in its vicinity was growing was a very real encouragement. However, there was a change in the attitude of many supporters of art in San Francisco. Earlier, they had been persons of wealth, interested in the arts, possibly not extremely well informed, not able to talk glibly about art, but believing in the museum and very liberal in supporting it.. They were looking for no benefits for themselves and were seeking simply to advance a good cause. This was not so evident after the war. There was a considerable change in personnel on the boards. To the board of trustees, to the women's board there was added a junior board of young, ambitious women. The attraction of the museum as a means for social recognition, even business recognition, had grown. The group as a whole, though it retained some self-effacing members concerned only with the help they could give, now included a good many others who were looking for some way to use the museum as a personal help to them in their position in the city.

One way of doing it was to multiply the number of social activities of a social kind related to its own cultural aims. However, thanks to the understanding of the older women's board members and their sympathy for its problem of too small a staff and too much to do with inadequate funds, this activity of a peripheral kind was held within limits. There was generally the supper for the opera opening; there were very handsome previews held for important exhibitions; there were a certain number of luncheons of a social kind. But it had not been too exaggerated an activity earlier. Now, after the war, the pressure to put on social events in order to bring personalities to public notice intensified. It was a very difficult situation because the increase in number of the staff members did not keep pace to match the activities. As a result, there was from time to time a clash between those who wanted activities, mostly of a social kind, and those who were more concerned with the sober presentation of exhibitions at the museum and the educational activities which accompanied them. It eventually became clear that there was a sharp division of policy between the rather austere, professional ideals of the director of the museum, which would have followed in a modest fashion the leadership in matters of scholarly interest that the Museum of Modern Art of New York had illustrated so well in the field of contemporary art and those groups, among women, especially, who were more concerned with making the museum a fashionable social center.

Meanwhile, a very great deal had been done in cultivating serious music. The central court had been turned into a quite reasonably, satisfactory, small auditorium, and distinguished concerts, a series of concerts, principally chamber music, for example, over many seasons the Budapest Quartet, and experimental modern music, were presented there. It is perhaps interesting to recall that the first concert that the Indian artist, the player of the sitar, Ravi Shankar, had in San Francisco was in this small auditorium. It was in 1958. He had become known on the West Coast only by the reputation established in New York, as a result of his concerts at the Museum of Modern Art, in association with the exhibition of Indian textiles and ornaments that had been presented there. He was not known to the general public in San Francisco. The consul general who was charged with presenting him there was unsure of the practicality of attracting a large audience. He therefore appealed to the San Francisco Museum of Art to sponsor and present the concert. This turned out to be extremely successful. Ravi Shankar and his tabla palyer, Chatur Lal at that time, were most cooperative. They provided notes of explanation on the background of Indian music very helpful to an audience for whom this type of music, was a new experience.

One of the main events before the director left the San Francisco Museum of Art was the special exhibition called, "Art in East and West," ("Art in Asia and the West") organized on the occasion of the National Conference of the U.S. National Commission of UNESCO, held in San Francisco. The exhibition undertook to trace, at least in general terms, the traditions of art in Asia. The last gallery attempted to indicate the extent to which contemporary Asian arts had been influenced by modern art of the West and also Asian art's influence on art in the United States, especially on art of the Pacific Coast. The reciprocal influences were subtle, but very noticeable, and it was perfectly clear that the artist Mark Tobey, for example, had derived inspiration as well as techniques from the Far Eastern schools. Similarly the Sri Lanka painter George Keyt had benefited by French modern painters. That was true also of a good many others, and to appreciate the play back and forth of influences was certainly a stimulating experience for the well-informed art appreciator.

Immediately on leaving the San Francisco Museum of Art in October of 1958, I went to Brazil to take part in the month-long UNESCO seminar on museums which was being carried on in that country. From 1952, when the UNESCO seminars began as a means of stimulating the museum profession, providing examples of excellence and giving instruction in techniques held in different parts of the world, I had followed all but one of them without fail. They were at that time month-long meetings. They were in the first instance international meetings, and the first one was held in the Brooklyn Museum in 1952. For that one, I was an observer, and followed closely the development of the ways to bring to attention the needs of the museum profession. The next one was held in Athens, Greece, in 1954, and for that I was the director, and its subject was museum education, then, as now, indeed, in many parts of the world, a field which needed examination and close study as a way to extend the influence of museums in their respective communities. That, too, was an international seminar, and it is interesting that one of the participants, the Pakistani museum man, Naqui, later was to return, first to his own country, and be a leader in the museum movement there, but eventually to become a high official in UNESCO itself. The month-long UNESCO seminar in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was the third in the series, and once more I attended, this time to participate, but the director was Georges-Henri Rivière, laying down very precise rules of guidance for the museum profession. The next one was to be held in Japan in 1960, but by that time, it was not possible for me to attend, as I had just taken up my work in New Delhi as director of the National Museum there.

In early 1959, I had settled in New York. In the beginning, briefly, I did some work as assistant director of the Guggenheim Museum when it was still in the old building, the temporary building. After removal to the new building, which the director, James Johnson Sweeney, disliked so intensely, it became not feasible to go on with that experience. However, I stayed in New York and did some free-lance writing, some organization of exhibitions and the like, and then the chance of going to India was offered to me, as I have explained earlier, and that experience followed from August, 1960.

Looking back over the more than fifty years of museum work described here, it seems that the museum profession has changed greatly since I joined it - possibly much for the better in the increased interest of a wider public in what museums show. But in Western countries in general, and certainly in the United States and in Britain, the pressure on the director, the problems of inflation and high costs are now much more severe than I could have imagined. The museum world of Asia - full of problems, of course, is now in some respects more tranquil than in the West.

END OF INTERVIEW

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